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Official Records

First Committee
16th Meeting
Thursday, 6 November 1997, 3 p.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Nkgowe . . . . . (Botswana)

The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

Agenda items 62 to 83 (*continued*)

Introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under all items

The Chairman: I call on the representative of Japan to introduce draft resolutions A/C.1/52/L.27 and A/C.1/52/L.28/Rev.1.

Mr. Hayashi (Japan): I have asked for the floor to introduce two draft resolutions, on both of which Japan has taken the initiative. The first draft resolution is A/C.1/52/L.27, entitled "Small arms". The second is A/C.1/52/L.28/Rev.1, entitled "Nuclear disarmament with a view to the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons".

First, on small arms, the draft resolution refers to the recommendations of the report prepared and subsequently approved unanimously by the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms that was established pursuant to resolution 50/70 B of 12 December 1995. As the Secretary-General stresses in his foreword to the report,

> "small arms and light weapons have been the primary or sole tools of violence in almost every recent conflict dealt with by the United Nations ... and these weapons have taken a heavy toll of human lives". [A/52/298, p. 2]

The Government of Japan, together with 37 other sponsors of this draft resolution, believes that the recommendations of the report are a valuable first step in addressing this intractable but imminent problem that the international community is faced with. It is in this context that operative paragraph 2 of the draft resolution calls upon all Member States to implement the relevant recommendations of the report to the extent possible.

While the Panel has completed its mandate successfully, we must not be complacent. Considering the importance of and widely held interest in the subject matter, we should maintain momentum by building upon the Panel's achievement. In this context, this draft resolution requests the Secretary-General to take some specific measures.

First, in operative paragraph 3, its requests him to initiate a study on the problems of ammunition and explosives in all their aspects, as early as possible. Secondly, in operative paragraph 4, it requests him to seek the views of Member States on the report and on the steps that they have taken to implement its recommendations, in particular, their views on the recommendation of the report concerning the convening of an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects. Thirdly, in operative paragraph 5, it further requests him to prepare a report, to be submitted to the General Assembly in 1999, with the assistance of a group of governmental experts to be nominated by him in 1998 on the basis of equitable geographical representation. The report shall deal with the progress made in the implementation of the recommendations made in the report and on further actions recommended to be taken.

Taking this opportunity, I wish to announce that the Government of Japan intends to sponsor a workshop on

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small arms at an appropriate date next year. In order to avoid any misunderstanding, I would like to make it clear that this workshop is not the international conference referred to in the draft resolution, but is another initiative taken by Japan in this field. We believe that this workshop will provide a good opportunity to encourage Member States to offer their views on the recommendations of the report and, in particular, on the recommendation on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects.

With regard to the second draft resolution, A/C.1/52/L.28/Rev.1, "Nuclear disarmament with a view to the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons", let me reiterate Japan's firm belief that we must make a persistent effort for the realization of a world free of nuclear weapons, and that this goal should be achieved through the implementation of various concrete and realistic measures. It is encouraging that previous draft resolutions with the same title enjoyed the support of an overwhelming majority of Member States.

The draft resolution this year is basically a follow-up to those adopted in previous years. The new elements in substance are as follows. First, in the sixth preambular paragraph, it welcomes the joint statement concerning the START process issued by the Presidents of the Russian Federation and the United States of America in Helsinki in March. The draft resolution refers to the joint statement in the hope that the Russian Federation will soon ratify START II, and that the two States will immediately follow it by beginning negotiations on a START III agreement.

Secondly, in the ninth preambular paragraph, the draft resolution notes the signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty by over 140 Member States. As I stated in the general debate, Japan regards this as proof of the strong desire throughout the international community to put an end to nuclear testing and to promote nuclear disarmament.

Thirdly, in the tenth preambular paragraph it also welcomes the smooth start of the strengthened review process of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), with its first Preparatory Committee meeting in April this year.

Finally, in paragraph 3 the draft resolution notes the importance of the safe and effective management of the fissile materials derived from dismantled nuclear weapons. It is our conviction that as the dismantlement of nuclear weapons proceeds the importance of the safe and effective management of resultant fissile materials becomes even greater. In terms of non-proliferation, this is not only in the interests of nuclear-weapon States, but also the concern of every country on Earth. In the context of nuclear disarmament, it is the indispensable prerequisite for the further advancement of nuclear disarmament, because it is impossible to move forward with the dismantlement of nuclear weapons unless the safe and effective management of resultant fissile material is secured.

While this draft resolution is submitted by Japan as the single sponsor, Japan is now ready to invite co-sponsors. Japan appeals to every Member State that supports the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world to become a sponsor of the draft resolution, and encourages each delegation to go to the Secretariat office to sign for sponsorship. Japan believes that the two draft resolutions it is tabling this year will make an important contribution to disarmament in the fields of both nuclear and conventional weapons. Japan hopes that the draft resolutions will enjoy the widest possible support.

The Chairman: I call on the representative of Canada to introduce draft resolutions A/C.1/52/L.1 and A/C.1/52/L.30.

Mr. Moher (Canada): First I should like, on a rather ad hoc basis, to thank the Ambassador of Japan for the statement he has just made and for the invitation he extended. We will certainly take him up on it.

This afternoon I should like to speak with regard to two draft resolutions. The first draft resolution is A/C.1/52/L.1, "Convention on the prohibition of the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines and on their destruction". This draft resolution, of 22 October 1997, is a dramatic demonstration by 106 countries of their strong support for the signing this December of the Convention that I have just identified. Ten additional countries have now associated themselves as sponsors of this draft resolution: Benin, Brunei Darussalam, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Kuwait, Maldives, Seychelles, Slovakia and Thailand. All of the sponsors, on whose behalf I am speaking this afternoon, invite and welcome additional countries to join them.

The draft resolution is a remarkable expression of political will and commitment by a significant majority of States drawn from all regions of the world. It is certainly Canada's belief and intent — shared, we know, by many others — that this Convention shall serve both to crystallize and to mobilize the entire international community to take steps to end the suffering, death and economic and social hardships caused by these weapons. As many here are aware, it is this objective which has led to Canada and

others developing a comprehensive programme for Ottawa this December, when other practical measures will be further elaborated in such fields as demining, victim assistance and social and economic rehabilitation. All countries, whether or not they are signatories to the Convention, are invited to participate. We are pleased to confirm that a general briefing on the Ottawa programme is being given tomorrow, Friday, 7 November, at 3 p.m. in Room 8. All interested delegations are welcome — indeed, urged — to attend.

This brings us back to the draft resolution. Canada and its partners are gratified by the support given to it. We welcome yet more additional sponsors. I am pleased to be able to say that, since beginning this statement, the Republic of Moldova has committed itself to sponsor the draft resolution. I would like to go further: if any delegation should not be able to sponsor, we urge it to vote in favour. Our sincere wish, in fact, would be to see this draft resolution adopted without a vote. But if some delegations, for reasons of national policy or circumstance, are not in a position to allow this, we respect that and we strongly hope that they will be able at least to abstain. Our collective objective — Canada and the 116 co-sponsors — is that this draft resolution shall receive the greatest expression of support with the fewest possible reservations. The cooperation and understanding of all is urged in that regard.

Finally, Canada, speaking for Canada alone, wishes to express once again its deepest appreciation for the collective efforts over the past year which have brought us to where we are today. The work has been done by many; the credit belongs to many — to Governments, to non-governmental organizations, to the United Nations, to the International Committee of the Red Cross, and to dedicated individuals everywhere. Our collective effort has begun well; our goal now is to apply the same collective will and momentum to an effective action plan for the future and realize our common goals.

I should now like to refer to a separate draft resolution. Canada, on behalf of the 22 sponsors listed in document A/C.1/52/L.30, as well as one additional sponsor, Croatia, is pleased formally to present the draft resolution entitled "Verification in all its aspects, including the role of the United Nations in the field of verification". As such, the draft resolution becomes part of the Committee's history of addressing this topic over the past decade or more.

The central and overriding message of this draft resolution, contained in its paragraph 1, concerns

> "the critical importance of, and the vital contribution that has been made by, effective verification measures in arms limitation and disarmament agreements and other similar obligations".

Emphasizing this message, and reaffirming the 16 principles of verification drawn up by the Disarmament Commission, are significant actions by the First Committee. Canada and the other sponsors appreciate the wide support being expressed for the draft resolution and urge all delegations that have not yet done so to endorse it as well. Again, it is our strong hope that it can be adopted without a vote.

As a separate but related matter, Canada wishes to inform all delegations that we are pleased to make available today copies of the publication entitled *Bibliography on Arms Control Verification: Sixth Update*, dated October 1997.

Mr. de Icaza (Mexico) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I wish to refer to the draft resolutions dealing with conventional weapons.

My delegation is a supporter and sponsor of draft resolution A/C.1/52/L.1 on the total prohibition of anti-personnel mines, and is also a sponsor of draft resolution A/C.1/52/L.40.

Draft resolution A/C.1/52/L.1, which was just introduced by the representative of Canada, gives an account of the work achieved in a commendable period of time in compliance with General Assembly resolution 51/45 S, which urged States to complete, as soon as possible, the negotiation of a legally binding international agreement to ban the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. Only the complete elimination of anti-personnel landmines will enable us to address effectively the humanitarian tragedy these devices cause.

For more than 20 years, the international community has agreed on successive partial restrictions and prohibitions of anti-personnel mines with a view to eliminating their indiscriminate and irresponsible use. Nonetheless, the constant spiralling increase in the number of areas affected by mines and minefields and the number of innocent victims have led the more than 114 sponsors of draft resolution A/C.1/52/L.1 to the inevitable conclusion

that only a total prohibition of these weapons can begin to resolve the humanitarian tragedy that they represent.

We therefore join in inviting all States to sign and ratify and, where appropriate, accede to the Ottawa Convention.

The norms of international humanitarian law address humanitarian and military considerations in a balanced fashion, as asserted in paragraph 86 of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD I). The reaffirmation and progressive development of these norms should respond to the military needs of each era and each region and to the imperatives of the human conscience. Amended Protocol II to the 1980 Convention on inhumane weapons undoubtedly represents a major phase in the development of norms regarding methods and means of warfare. New provisions contained therein restrict the use of mines, booby traps and other devices and impose innovative and significant restrictions on the transfer of mines, particularly anti-personnel mines.

The major producers and exporters of these indiscriminate weapons participated in approving the amended Protocol. As far as anti-personnel mines are concerned, my delegation viewed the adoption of the Protocol, in May of last year, as an interim measure aimed at strengthening and facilitating the process leading towards a total universal ban on these weapons, and we so stated at the Review Conference.

We are now drawing close to the holding of a second review conference on the Convention, scheduled to take place by the year 2001 at the latest, for which we need to begin preparatory work as soon as possible. With this in mind we participated in the recent seminar on ballistics and traumatic effects of small- calibre weapons and ammunition organized by the Government of Switzerland. The seminar provided an opportunity for a useful exchange of views that will enable us to determine the viability of an exercise to regulate small-calibre weapons and ammunition as reflected in the Final Declaration of the first Review Conference.

In the process of preparing for this second Review Conference, we must also determine whether those few but important countries that are not yet in a position to become parties to the Ottawa Convention would be able to accept additional restrictions and prohibitions regarding the use, stockpiling, production or transfer of anti-personnel mines. For these reasons, my delegation will support draft resolution A.C.1/52/L.22 introduced by Sweden.

Since the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, Mexico has been a sponsor of draft resolution A/C.1/52/L.40, since it is our conviction that the control of conventional arms has better prospects of success at the regional level. This was demonstrated in practice with the recent conclusion of the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials, which will be opened for signature on 14 November next at the headquarters of the Organization of American States (OAS).

In this connection, it is also worth noting that the Rio Group summit in Paraguay in August affirmed the determination of its members to continue the consultation process with a view to adopting measures of self-restraint as regards the transfer, acquisition or manufacture of certain types of conventional arms in the region. To that end, Mexico will host a meeting of experts in Cancún at the beginning of 1998.

With respect to draft resolutions A/C.1/52/L.8 and A/C.1/52/L.27, my delegation welcomes the report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms (A/52/298), which provides interesting data that give us a better understanding of the problem posed by the excessive availability of these weapons and their harmful effects. Paragraph 80 of the report recognizes the work done by the Organization of American States to conclude an inter-American convention against the illicit trafficking in such weapons.

We also endorse the recommendations of the Panel of Experts on the collection of these weapons in the context of processes to consolidate peace with the participation of all parties concerned. We therefore welcome Mali's initiative on a United Nations contribution to the collection of the small arms of the States of the Saharo-Sahelian region that have requested such help.

Finally, I would like to comment on draft resolution A/C.1/52/L.18, on "Consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures". My delegation took part in the consultations held on the subject and is of the view that we now have a balanced draft that reflects the wide range of opinions and recommendations on this question.

It was particularly important to avoid hasty conclusions on the content of the report of the Secretary-General (A/52/289), particularly since very few States have commented on it.

Mexico will continue to take an active part in the deliberations of Working Group III, on item 6 of the agenda of the Disarmament Commission, which has been dealing with guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament.

Any agreement in this respect should be based on the principle of the shared responsibility of States that produce and supply conventional weapons and those that receive them. It is the duty of both sides to ensure that the quantity and level of sophistication of weaponry produced and transferred do not exceed legitimate defence needs and that such weapons are not trafficked in illegally. This will help prevent the regional instability that results from arms races, as well as the exacerbation, intensification and prolongation of existing conflicts.

Mr. Goosen (South Africa): It is an honour for my delegation to express its very strong support for draft resolution A/C.1/52/L.1 entitled "Convention on the prohibition of the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines and on their destruction". The Convention, which is the focus of this draft resolution, represents a clear and total ban on anti-personnel mines and establishes a compelling new international norm against this scourge which has so long been wreaked on humanity, especially innocent civilians, mostly women and children. South Africa looks forward to the early entry into force of the Convention and appeals to all States to heed the call of the international community against these inhumane weapons.

It is also a pleasure for me to bring to the Committee's attention the following statement on anti-personnel mines, which was issued in South Africa by the Department of Foreign Affairs on 30 October 1997.

> "South Africa today destroyed its remaining stockpiled anti-personnel landmines. The destruction is in accordance with the decision by the South African Cabinet on 19 February 1997 to prohibit the use, development, production and stockpiling of anti-personnel landmines, with immediate effect.
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> "This destruction of South Africa's stockpile of 261,423 anti-personnel landmines commenced on 21 May 1997 with the first public destruction of anti-personnel landmines at Alkantpan. South Africa will retain 5,000 anti-personnel mines and 13,000 practice mines to maintain and further develop its demining capability to ensure that these landmines are removed in the shortest possible time and 'in the most cost-effective manner. This retention — for the purposes stated — is permissible in terms of the recently concluded total-ban treaty.
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> "On 18 September 1997, the Oslo Diplomatic Conference on an International Total Ban on Landmines adopted the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on their Destruction. In terms of article 4 of the Convention, States parties will be obligated to destroy their stockpile of anti-personnel landmines not later than four years after the entry into force of the Convention for that State party. With this final phase of the destruction, South Africa has therefore fulfilled its obligation in terms of this Convention even before the Convention is open for signature.
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> "The South African Government has worked closely in partnership with other Governments, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and its affiliated partner, the South African Campaign to Ban Landmines, on a national, regional and international basis within the Ottawa process to ensure that efforts to deal with the global landmine crisis are ultimately successful. The South African Government will work to promote the universality of the Convention and to contribute to the removal of anti-personnel mines placed throughout the world and to provide assistance for the care and rehabilitation, including the social and economic integration, of mine victims."

Mr. Benítez Sáenz (Uruguay) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) countries — Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay — and of Bolivia and Chile, to express our satisfaction with the draft resolution on the "Convention on the prohibition of the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines and on their destruction", introduced by the delegation of Canada.

Anti-personnel landmines have been aptly defined as "arms of mass destruction in slow motion", and this type of weapon continues to inflict irreversible damage and take innocent lives on a daily basis, even long after the conflicts have ended.

Minefields, which result from the use of millions of landmines, are found in almost all regions of the world, and demining is one of the most important challenges in the process of reconstructing societies in the post-conflict stage.

Anti-personnel mines affect the economic viability of the areas where they have been laid, take an enormous toll in humanitarian terms and have long-term repercussions on the lives of the civilian population after a conflict has ended. In various regions of the world, they also jeopardize peacekeeping operations.

The contingents of some MERCOSUR countries involved in United Nations peacekeeping operations have been put at risk and killed by landmines in various parts of the world.

But the most regrettable effects are on the women and children who are killed or mutilated by these hidden, indiscriminate weapons that respect no truce and have no capacity to observe a ceasefire.

In recent years the international community has become increasingly aware of the horrendous humanitarian crisis caused by the use of anti-personnel mines and has reacted with global, regional and subregional initiatives.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Production, Stockpiling and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, recently adopted in Oslo within the framework of the Ottawa process, is the expression of the international community's consensus on attaining a total prohibition of such devices, the use of which is counter to international humanitarian law.

In this respect, we must highlight the importance of the fact that cooperation in demining and assistance to victims were given special consideration during the negotiation of the Convention, as fundamental and complementary aspects of alleviating suffering and opening the way towards development.

At the regional level, our countries are guided by the spirit of cooperation and the determination to contribute to global stability and security through individual and regional actions to foster peace.

In this context, we should recall the Asunción presidential Declaration, adopted at the eleventh summit of the Rio Group last August, whereby the Presidents agreed to participate actively in the Ottawa process and undertook to work jointly with a view to making our region the first region in the world to be free of anti-personnel mines.

This objective, set out in the resolutions of the Organization of American States on making the western hemisphere a zone free of anti-personnel landmines, adopted in 1996 and 1997, has been strengthened at the highest level through the aforementioned Declaration of the Rio Group.

As evidence of this commitment, and as an example for other regional groups, all the countries that are members of MERCOSUR, along with Bolivia and Chile, have supported the signing in Ottawa between 2 and 4 December 1997 of the Convention that will totally prohibit these weapons.

We in the MERCOSUR countries, along with Bolivia and Chile, are convinced that today we have a unique opportunity to eliminate anti-personnel mines from the face of the earth, and we are committed to sparing no effort so as to attain this noble objective.

The Chairman: The next speaker is the representative of Gabon, who will introduce draft resolution A/C.1/52/L.6.

Mr. Onanga-Anyanga (Gabon) (*interpretation from French*): I am grateful for this opportunity to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/52/L.6, under agenda item 72 (b), entitled "Review and implementation of the Concluding Document of the Twelfth Special Session of the General Assembly: Regional confidence-building measures".

As the footnote on the first page of the draft resolution indicates, it is on behalf of the 11 member States of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, namely, Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe and Gabon that my delegation has the honour of introducing this draft resolution.

Established by the Secretary-General on 28 May 1992 under General Assembly resolution 46/37 B, on the initiative of the countries that are members, the Standing Advisory Committee is a subregional group with the goals of developing confidence-building measures, encouraging arms limitation and establishing an environment conducive to the development of the countries involved.

The members of the Standing Advisory Committee welcome the continuing support of the General Assembly for its programme of work, focused on preventive diplomacy, disarmament measures and non-proliferation at the subregional level.

The support of the international community is extremely important to promote the building of a lasting peace and prevent the outbreak of new armed conflicts in Central Africa, where, as the Secretary-General emphasized in his report A/52/293, the situation remains extremely disquieting, in particular because of the serious events of recent years.

Allow me to reiterate here the great importance of the support of the international community in assisting the member States of the Standing Advisory Committee to carry out the positive measures they have adopted, in a context that must be described as particularly difficult, in order to strengthen subregional security through increased cooperation, as is reflected in document A/52/283, which contains the report of the ninth ministerial meeting of the Standing Advisory Committee, held in Libreville, Gabon, from 7 to 11 July 1997.

Before the consideration of the draft resolution itself, I felt it was fitting to recall the specific context in which the activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa take place.

As for draft resolution A/C.1/52/L.6, I shall limit myself to brief comments on paragraphs 5 and 7, which are the only real innovations as compared to General Assembly resolution 51/46 C, on the same question, which we adopted by consensus during the last session.

In operative paragraph 5 of the draft, the General Assembly would welcome with satisfaction the programmes and activities of the Standing Advisory Committee for the period 1997-1998, adopted by the member States during the ninth ministerial meeting.

These programmes and activities are found in subparagraphs (a), (b), (c), (d), (e), (f), (g) and (h) of paragraph 5, and are aimed respectively at: setting up and rendering operational at the earliest opportunity and on the basis of voluntary contributions an early-warning system for Central Africa; launching programmes designed to retrain demobilized soldiers and prepare them for reintegration into civilian life; combating the illegal circulation of weapons and drugs in the subregion; organizing training seminars in order to strengthen the capacity of the Central African States to participate more actively in peacekeeping operations organized under the auspices of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity; organizing joint military exercises to simulate the conduct of standard peacekeeping operations; organizing, for members of the armed forces and security forces of the Central African States, seminars and awareness programmes relating to the conduct of public affairs, the rule of law and respect for human rights; holding a subregional conference on the topic "Democratic institutions and peace in Central Africa"; and reverting to the holding of two annual meetings of the Standing Advisory Committee at the ministerial level in order to further consultations among the member States.

Aside from the organization of annual ministerial meetings of the Committee, under subparagraph (h), which I have just cited, all the other programmes and activities can be implemented only on the basis of voluntary contributions to the special Trust Fund established by the Secretary-General to that end.

We are convinced that the achievement of these various objectives is likely to contribute to fostering confidence among Member States and to strengthening the democratic bases of the Governments of Central Africa, two factors that are essential to the establishment of greater security and peace in the subregion.

It is here that I would like once again to express our gratitude to the permanent members of the Security Council for having participated in the work of the ninth ministerial meeting of the Committee. The experience of such joint action with the permanent members, to which paragraph 7 makes reference, was very useful and should be continued.

Indeed, because of the responsibilities for the maintenance of peace and security incumbent upon them under the Charter, there is a need for the members of the Security Council — all of the members, and principal among them the permanent members of that body — be directly involved in efforts to implement confidence-building measures on a regional level.

Before concluding, I should like to reaffirm the commitment of the countries members of the Standing Advisory Committee to pursue their efforts to establish conditions for greater peace and security in their subregion, which is so troubled and yet, potentially, so rich.

In this connection, it is fitting to stress the importance of genuine international solidarity in support of those efforts. We should like again to thank those countries that are providing assistance to the Committee through their voluntary contributions to the special Trust Fund established by the Secretary-General to finance the Committee's activities.

We are also grateful to the Secretary-General for having paved the way for the implementation of resolution 58/46 C and for having sent his Special Representative for the Great Lakes to Libreville to participate in the work of the Committee's ninth ministerial meeting.

The countries members of the Committee hope that when the time comes the First Committee will, as it has always and rightly done, adopt by consensus draft resolution A/C.1/52/L.6, which I have just introduced.

I should also like to make a brief comment on draft resolution A/C.1/52/L.1. I would begin by saying that my delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Canada on this subject. Although my country is not directly threatened by the spread of anti-personnel mines, a scourge because of the thousands of victims they claim daily, we are nevertheless convinced of the urgent need for the international community to spare no efforts to ban those weapons once and for all.

The Chairman: I now call on the representative of India to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/52/L.15.

Mr. Hegde (India): I have the honour to introduce a draft resolution entitled "Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons", contained in document A/C.1/52/L.15, which is sponsored by Bangladesh, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Colombia, Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Haiti, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kenya, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Malaysia, Mexico, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria, the Philippines, the Sudan, Viet Nam and India.

India and several other countries — non-nuclear developing countries members of the Non-Aligned Movement and the other grouping of developing countries — have for some time now been proposing and underlining, through a call for a legally binding prohibition on the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, the need for a convention on this issue. We have always been encouraged by the fact that a majority of countries in the General Assembly support this proposal. We, however, deeply regret that no action has been taken to implement this resolution, mainly due to the negative approach of most of the nuclear-weapon States and States under their nuclear protection.

This proposal has assumed particular relevance in view of the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued last year in response to the General Assembly's query on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons. While we welcome the Court's Advisory Opinion as a whole, there are two important aspects which I would like to highlight while introducing this draft resolution. First, the Court's Advisory Opinion made international humanitarian law applicable to the use of nuclear weapons. As we are all aware, international humanitarian law is applicable in all circumstances. Therefore, there already exists in international humanitarian law a general prohibition on the use of these weapons of mass destruction.

Secondly, it has become evident from the statement of the judges of the International Court of Justice that a legally binding instrument specifically prohibiting the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is both pertinent and necessary to underwrite the existing provisions of international humanitarian law. This would remove any ambiguities which may be resorted to in justifying the use of nuclear weapons by the nuclear-weapon States. Hence, it would be a genuine and significant step forward towards the elimination of nuclear weapons and also towards a nuclear-weapon-free world.

The text of the draft resolution submitted this year is essentially similar to the one adopted last year. This draft resolution dovetails with draft resolutions proposing negotiations on a nuclear-weapons convention, and we expect it would eventually subsume that proposed convention. The determination to achieve a universal nuclear-weapons convention has therefore been clearly stated in the preambular paragraphs of both the draft resolution and the draft Convention annexed to it. The draft resolution underlines that the use of nuclear weapons poses the most serious threat to the survival of mankind; refers to the International Court of Justice's Advisory Opinion that the threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict, that is, the principles and provisions of humanitarian law; expresses the conviction that a multilateral agreement prohibiting the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons would strengthen international security and help promote a climate for negotiations leading to the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons; and reiterates its request to the Conference on Disarmament to commence negotiations to reach agreement on an international convention prohibiting the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances, taking as a possible basis the draft Convention annexed to the draft resolution.

The draft resolution that we and other sponsors are proposing today is intended to ensure that the prohibition

against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is codified in an international disarmament agreement, perhaps the first genuine nuclear disarmament agreement. We earnestly hope that this draft resolution will enjoy even larger support this year, particularly in view of the importance of the issue at this juncture, when the window of opportunity still exists to lay the foundations for a durable peace by ushering in a nuclear-weapon-free world as we step into the next millennium.

The Chairman: I call on the representative of Indonesia to introduce draft resolutions A/C.1/52/L.9, A/C.1/52/L.10, A/C.1/52/L.11 and A/C.1/52/L.12, and draft decision A/C.1/52/L.13.

Mr. Parnohadiningrat (Indonesia): It is an honour and privilege for my delegation — in its capacity as the Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement working group on disarmament and on behalf of the non-aligned countries — to introduce four draft resolutions and one draft decision.

The first draft resolution is submitted under item 71 (f) of the agenda and is contained in document A/C.1/52/L.9. It refers to the relationship between disarmament and development. This relationship has gained a new momentum, especially in the current international situation, which has witnessed the diversion of a large proportion of human, financial, material and technological resources and has placed a heavy burden on the economies of all nations, particularly the developing countries. It has also adversely impacted on international financial and trade flows. The stark contrast between military expenditures and the paucity of aid for development, with its attendant poverty and misery, is equally self-evident. Hence, this is an issue of exceptional importance to the non-aligned countries and calls for the allocation of a share of the resources released as a result of the implementation of disarmament agreements to socio-economic development, thereby reducing the gap between the developed and developing countries.

The draft resolution acknowledges the note by the Secretary-General and actions taken in accordance with the Final Document of the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development. Member States are invited to communicate their views and proposals to implement the action programme adopted by the Conference. The Secretary-General is requested to continue to take action to implement that action programme and to submit a report to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. It is our hope that this draft resolution will be adopted by consensus.

The second draft resolution is submitted under item 71 (g) of the agenda and is contained in document A/C.1/52/L.10. It deals with the observance of environmental norms in the drafting and implementation of agreements on disarmament and arms control. Its objective is to take into account the importance of protection of the environment when formulating disarmament agreements. It reflects concerns relative to the preservation of the environment within the context of disarmament agreements. The linkages between them are undeniable and mutually interactive. Incidents and accidents involving uncontrolled radioactive sources continue to increase. Particular risks are posed by the legacy of contaminated areas left from military activities involving nuclear materials. The dismantling of certain weapons calls for environmentally sound techniques and methods.

In a major departure, the draft resolution refrains from making reference to specific disarmament agreements. Nonetheless, it calls upon States to take fully into account relevant environmental norms while negotiating disarmament and arms control treaties and agreements and to apply scientific and technological progress to enhance security and facilitate disarmament, without detriment to the environment or to its effective contribution to attaining sustainable development.

In this regard, the Non-Aligned Movement would like to stress that this draft resolution invites all Member States to communicate to the Secretary-General information on the measures they have adopted to promote the objectives envisaged in the present draft resolution, and requests the Secretary-General to submit a report containing this information to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. It is our hope that this draft resolution will be adopted by consensus.

The third draft resolution, contained in document A/C.1/52/L.11, is submitted under item 71 (e) of the agenda and concerns the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. As we are aware, during the decade from 1978 to 1988 there were three special sessions devoted to disarmament. Since then changes in the international arena have focused attention on the most important issues of disarmament, with a view to achieving the goal of the elimination of weapons of mass destruction and the reduction of conventional armaments.

Hence, there is an imperative need to undertake a reassessment and reappraisal of the whole range of disarmament issues, in order to determine our approach and

future course of action in limiting armaments, in achieving disarmament, and in addressing related security issues. It is the belief of the sponsors of the draft resolution that these objectives can be achieved under the multilateral auspices of the United Nations. To a greater extent than ever before, the Organization should be utilized as a forum for action-oriented negotiations so that it can make an even greater contribution to resolving the myriad disarmament issues that confront us. The fourth special session will offer a unique opportunity to do so. Its convening will be both timely and appropriate.

It is for these weighty reasons that the draft resolution calls for the convening of the fourth special session on disarmament, which is subject to the emergence of a general agreement on its objectives and agenda during the deliberations on this question at the substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission in 1998. Depending on the outcome of those deliberations, the draft resolution seeks to set an exact date for and to decide on various organizational matters relating to the convening of the fourth special session. Prior to that, however, adequate preparations would be essential to ensure its successful outcome.

Considering the importance that we attach to limiting, reducing and eliminating armaments, it is the hope of the sponsors that the draft resolution will receive the overwhelming support of Member States. On this draft resolution, the Non-Aligned Movement would like to request the Secretariat to reissue document A/C.1/52/L.11 with paragraph 2 deleted.

The fourth draft resolution is submitted under item 77 of the agenda and is contained in document A/C.1/52/L.12. It refers to the implementation of the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace. It was the hope of the non-aligned countries that once the cold war was over and the conflicts that raged in some of the countries in the region had terminated, the mandate of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean would be fulfilled. However, the withdrawal of some of the permanent members of the Security Council and major maritime users of the Indian Ocean has been a serious setback in its continuing endeavours to implement the provisions of the Declaration.

For these reasons, the Ad Hoc Committee has repeatedly called for their participation in its work, which is indispensable for the effective discharge of its mandate and for the development of a mutually beneficial dialogue to foster peace, security and stability in the Indian Ocean. This appeal is reflected in paragraph 2 of the draft resolution. Towards the attainment of this objective, paragraph 3 requests the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee to continue the dialogue and to report at an early date to the General Assembly. Support for the draft resolution would pave the way for negotiations and agreement to preserve peace and security in this strategically and economically important region.

Finally, on the draft decision contained in document A/C.1/52/L.13, members of the Non-Aligned Movement have concurred in recommending to the General Assembly that the item entitled "Review of the implementation of the Declaration on the Strengthening of International Security" be included in the provisional agenda of its fifty-fourth session.

Mr. Díaz-Pereira (Paraguay) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The delegation of Paraguay, in its capacity as coordinator of the Rio Group during this year, is honoured to make the following statement on behalf of the States members of the Group in respect of draft resolution A/C.1/52/L.11 on the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

Nineteen years after the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, held in 1978, at which agreement was reached on the main outlines of a strategy for disarmament, and nine years after the convening of the third special session on disarmament, we must recognize that the time is ripe to carry out a careful review of the process.

During the intervening period, positive progress has been made in disarmament, arms control and security matters. In this respect, Paraguay, as a Member of the United Nations, welcomes as a major achievement the fact that the progress made in the disarmament process and on non-proliferation and security matters has been achieved with the co-sponsorship of our Organization. To that end, we highlight once again the importance of multilateralism in the process of disarmament, as it ensures the full and equal participation of all Members of the Organization.

Despite this positive outcome, the Rio Group believes that this is the appropriate time to review what has been achieved and to set our future course of action in the field of arms control, disarmament and related security matters. This will be an opportune time, given the détente prevailing in the post-cold-war era, for the international community objectively to address the process of reviewing and evaluating the vast field of disarmament.

The establishment of a realistic and broad agenda will determine whether the special session achieves concrete results and is thus able to avoid the lack of progress we have noted in certain areas during previous sessions.

In conclusion, we would like to emphasize that despite the significant progress achieved in this area, a great deal remains to be done to attain the final objective of complete disarmament, which is the sole guarantee of international peace and security.

The Chairman: I call on the representative of Malaysia to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/52/L.37.

Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia): My delegation has the honour to introduce to the Committee the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/52/L.37, dated 31 October 1997, entitled "Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons". This draft resolution is sponsored by the following delegations: Algeria, Bangladesh, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burundi, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Fiji, Ghana, Guyana, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Jamaica, Kenya, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malawi, Marshall Isiands, Mexico, Mongolia, Myanmar, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Samoa, San Marino, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Thailand, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Viet Nam, Zimbabwe and, of course, my own delegation. We are also pleased to learn that Lesotho and Suriname have also become sponsors, and that a number of other delegations have indicated to us that they too would sponsor this draft resolution in due course.

As was evident during the general debate at the beginning of the Committee's current session, an overwhelming majority of the Members of this Organization are seriously concerned at the lack of genuine efforts and the extremely slow pace in negotiations on nuclear disarmament leading to the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons. This draft resolution, a follow-up to resolution 51/45 M, which the General Assembly adopted at its last session, seeks to address this concern. The draft, which comprises 12 preambular paragraphs and four operative paragraphs, underlines once again in its first operative paragraph the world Court's unanimous opinion that

> "there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control".

This clearly attests to the fact that States have a legal obligation not only to pursue negotiations but also to bring such negotiations to an early conclusion. It also reiterates the call made by the General Assembly, through resolution 51/45 M, for all States to immediately fulfil that obligation by commencing multilateral negotiations in 1998 leading to an early conclusion of a nuclear-weapons convention prohibiting the development, production, testing, deployment, stockpiling, transfer, threat or use of nuclear weapons and providing for their elimination. It is to serve as a continuing reminder to the international community of the solemn obligation set out in article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, in which the States parties pledged their commitment to pursue in good faith negotiations on effective measures relating to nuclear disarmament, and of their determined pursuit of systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally, with the ultimate goal of eliminating those weapons. The sponsors of this draft resolution are committed to building on the opinion of the world Court and to paving the way for the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons.

The draft resolution also appreciates the significant contributions towards nuclear disarmament made by existing regional arrangements, as demonstrated by the establishment of various nuclear-weapon-free zones in some parts of the world. It also acknowledges ongoing efforts and past achievements towards the reduction of nuclear arms through bilateral negotiations. However, important as they are, bilateral negotiations address only the issue of the reduction in numbers of these weapons to a certain ceiling — not their total elimination or the changing of existing policies on the use or threat of use of these weapons of mass destruction. They therefore do not address the genuine concerns of the non-nuclear-weapon States, which are still threatened by the continued existence of these weapons. This will continue to be the case until and unless the policy of nuclear deterrence being pursued by the nuclear-weapon States is finally abandoned and nuclear weapons are entirely eliminated. It is for this reason that the draft resolution, while calling for the intensification of bilateral efforts, emphasizes the overriding need for multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament, which would provide the mechanism for and assurance of continued international efforts towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons in a way that bilateral efforts would not.

In recognition of the central role of the Conference on Disarmament in the multilateral disarmament negotiating process, as reflected in its preamble, the draft resolution clearly expects the Conference on Disarmament to overcome the current deadlock on nuclear disarmament negotiations and to intensify its efforts to commence these negotiations without further delay. At the same time, cognizant of the limited membership of the Conference on Disarmament, the draft resolution makes a broader appeal, calling on all States to undertake multilateral efforts to achieve the objective of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. In this regard, it is important for the whole international community, in particular the nuclear-weapon States, to adopt a more pragmatic approach and orientation towards achieving this desirable goal, to which all of us are committed.

In introducing this draft resolution, my delegation expresses its sincere appreciation to its sponsors and other potential sponsors as well as to those delegations that will vote in favour of the draft resolution.

Mr. Sorreta (Philippines): As this is my first formal statement under your chairmanship, Sir, I beg your indulgence as I burden you with my greetings and with an expression of my pleasure at seeing you in the Chair — and of my rather belated appreciation for the assistance of your very helpful, accommodating and knowledgeable secretariat.

I would like to express the unreserved support of the Philippines for the draft resolutions just introduced by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and to acknowledge the hard work done by that representative; it has been a difficult trek for him, and we all have praise for his efforts.

I would like to speak on two draft resolutions, on issues about which the Philippines feels quite passionate. Draft resolution A/C.1/52/L.1, on anti-personnel landmines, introduced by Canada, brings to the First Committee and, through it, to the United Nations the intense work done by a large number of countries, organizations within those countries, organizations that cross national boundaries, and the very citizens of those countries. The Ottawa process does credit to our work here in the Committee, for the Ottawa process is the kind of action that we, as a committee dealing with matters of disarmament and international security, have been advocating and imploring nations to take. Its humanitarian dimensions are invaluable, and it is worthy of the support it has been gaining and, we hope, will continue to gain.

The Philippines hopes that the pace of the entry into force and implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, and of related actions, will match the pace, depth, commitment and substance with which it was negotiated.

The Philippines recognizes the right of self-defence enshrined in the Charter. The Philippines believes that this right is inherent in the existence of a State. The Charter, however, provides qualifications. We believe that these qualifications are not exclusive. States do not have an absolute right to use whatever destructive force they wish in the exercise of the right of self-defence. Today it is virtually impossible under customary and conventional law to justify the use of chemical or biological weapons in the exercise of that right.

These qualifications of the right of self-defence were raised by my country and others before the International Court of Justice in its hearings that led to the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*. This brings me to my next point. The Philippines is fully behind draft resolution A/C.1/52/L.37, introduced by Malaysia, which calls upon all States to fulfil the obligation identified by the Court and described in operative paragraph 1 of the draft resolution.

During the discussions that led to the current text of draft resolution A/C.1/52/L.37, the issue was raised of whether or not the language of the draft resolution should emphasize that this obligation is a legal one. The drafters decided not to include the word "legal" in describing this obligation. The Philippines would like to note that by and large the International Court of Justice does not hand down rulings or opinions on any obligations other than legal ones. We must remember that, in spite of the very lofty and almost omnipotent-sounding title of the Court, it is still a court of law and is not in the business of declaring social or moral obligations. Having said that, the Philippines looks forward to the implementation of paragraph 3 of the draft resolution, for this will provide a definitive compilation of the practice of States and their belief in the legality of their practice with regard to this obligation, and perhaps also with regard to the critical issue of the legality of the threat of nuclear weapons itself.

The Chairman: I call on the representative of Mali to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/52/L.8.

Mr. Ouane (Mali) (*interpretation from French*): As this is my first statement before the Committee at this session, I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship and to assure you of my delegation's full support.

It is an honour and a pleasure for the delegation of Mali to introduce for the fourth consecutive year a draft resolution on "Assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and collecting them", contained this year in document A/C.1/52/L.8. I do so on behalf of the sponsors of the draft resolution: Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Japan, Liberia, Mauritania, Niger, Togo and Mali.

The question of the illicit traffic in small arms has become well known. The proliferation of such weapons, especially among civilians and armed groups in the affected countries, has contributed to the persistence and exacerbation of conflicts in those countries, undermining government efforts to ensure security, order and sustainable development.

Given that national situations have major regional repercussions, the President of the Republic of Mali, His Excellency Mr. Alpha Oumar Konaré, in 1994 requested and obtained special assistance from the Secretary-General through the establishment of an Advisory Mission on the Proliferation of Light Weapons in the Saharo-Sahelian subregion. The countries of that region, which do not themselves produce weapons, had become flourishing markets for the industries of war. Where do these weapons come from? How do they get to our region? Unquestionably, the answers will help us learn how to guarantee a safe environment for the populations of countries that are the victims of this traffic, an environment conducive to development activities.

At the forty-ninth, fiftieth and fifty-first sessions, Mali's initiative gained the support of other countries from the subregion and from other regions through the adoption of resolutions 49/75 G, 50/50 H and 51/45 L, on assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and collecting them. Those resolutions reflected the commitment of their sponsors to the critical task of general and complete disarmament, and drew the attention of the international community to the real problems caused by the flow and use of small arms, especially in the countries of the West African subregion. The initiative helped develop in the United Nations the well-known concept of micro-disarmament.

Assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and collecting them is one of the principal objectives of draft resolution A/C.1/52/L.8. The central issue is knowing the best way to enhance security in the regions affected by the proliferation of small arms. It has become increasingly clear that in addition to efforts to restore peace, as in Mali, it is important that peacekeeping and conflict-prevention operations should include the element of effective disarmament.

It was along those lines that in June 1996 the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters expressed support for efforts to restore peace in West Africa on the basis of a proportionate and integrated approach to security and development. The present draft resolution on small arms is based on that approach, which is grounded in the idea that security and development go hand in hand. That approach envisions allocating a portion of development assistance to the establishment of the climate of security that is indispensable for launching development projects. But it goes beyond a mere series of defined activities, combining political, economic, legal, social and environmental measures within a common framework. Such a group of measures should enable States affected by the proliferation of small arms to achieve what has come to be called structural stability: a strengthening of the factors that make it possible to manage change in a peaceful environment.

The proportional integrated approach to security and development was at the centre of the high-level consulations on the consolidation of peace following the conflicts in West Africa, held here in New York at Headquarters on 21 October 1996. The aim was to promote greater awareness of and increased support for active management of the consolidation of peace for sustainable development.

Regarding the maintenance of peace, a concerted United Nations effort for conflict prevention, in particular in West Africa, can be seen. Primarily, this is an issue of defining measures suitable for States affected by the phenomenon of small-arms proliferation; the aim is on the one hand to assist in adapting to their specific needs approaches and techniques for demobilization and disarmament, and, on the other, to facilitate subregional cooperation concerning restrictions on the arms imports and border controls — that is, to advance and develop cooperation between customs, police, gendarmerie and similar control services.

It can be seen that today there is a real opportunity for cooperation on arms control and disarmament, an opportunity which must not be missed.

It is in this context that we see the draft resolution, which includes the following amendments as compared to the previous resolution.

The preambular paragraph dealing with the establishment of close regional cooperation with a view to strengthening security has been updated to take into account the meetings at Yamoussoukro and Niamey.

Similarly, the General Assembly, on the basis of the Secretary-General's support for the proposal for a moratorium on the importing, exporting and manufacture of light weapons which was formulated during the ministerial consultation held in Bamako on 26 March 1997, would encourage the States involved to pursue their consultations on the matter.

The General Assembly would encourage the establishment of national commissions and invite the international community to support the smooth functioning of those already set up.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all the the sponsors for their commitment to this draft resolution and to thank, on their behalf, the United Nations Department of Political Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme, the Institute for Disarmament Research and development partners for their constructive action designed to curb the phenomenon of the proliferation of small arms.

We hope that, as in past years, the present draft resolution will be adopted without a vote and that it will gain even more sponsors.

The Chairman: I call on the representative of Sri Lanka to introduce draft resolutions A/C.1/52/L.19 and A/C.1/52/L.20.

Mr. Goonetilleke (Sri Lanka): Permit me first, Mr. Chairman, to introduce the draft resolution on the report of the Conference on Disarmament, contained in document A/C.1/52/L.20.

Two weeks ago, in my capacity as President of the Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament, I had the privilege of introducing its report to the First Committee. Having noted the comments made by a number of delegations on the performance of the Conference on Disarmament during its 1997 session, I pointed out to the Committee that after the intensive negotiations conducted by the Conference on a Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) it had to pause for a while and take stock of the situation before committing itself to a fresh round of negotiations on another disarmament issue or issues.

It is a universally accepted fact that the Conference on Disarmament is the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community, and its primary role remains substantive negotiations on priority questions of disarmament. During the course of our general debate and the informal meetings that followed, a number of delegations expressed the view that the present international climate following the end of the cold war should be utilized to conduct multilateral negotiations with a view to reaching agreement on issues relating to disarmament matters.

This view is supported by the entire international community and is reflected in the present draft resolution. Operative paragraph 1 of the draft resolution reaffirms the role of the Conference on Disarmament, and the subsequent paragraph welcomes the determination of the Conference to fulfil its role with a view to making early substantive progress on priority items of its agenda.

Having listened carefully to the statements made during the current session, I have to admit that deciding on the priority items could well be a difficult task, taking into consideration the fact that delegations or groups of delegations could have different views on priority items from their own vantage points. For example, anti-personnel landmines can be a priority item to some delegations, whereas elimination of nuclear weapons could be a priority to others.

Given that the Conference on Disarmament is a forum that takes decisions by consensus, it will not be possible for one group of delegations to impose its will on the others. This being the situation, delegations and groups of delegations have to be accommodating to the extent possible so as to facilitate the efficient and meaningful functioning of the Conference, bearing in mind that it has a responsibility towards the entire international community, which is a task well beyond serving the national interests of the Conference's membership.

In my opinion there is a way out of the experience the Conference on Disarmament had to face in 1997. At the outset of the 1998 session, the Conference could adopt its agenda and quickly take a decision to re-establish one or more working mechanisms, such as ad hoc committees, on the least controversial issues. Having thus begun the substantive work, the Conference could undertake

consultations with a view to resolving other outstanding issues.

It is with such a situation in view that operative paragraph 3 has been formulated. This paragraph was influenced by paragraph 54 of the report of the Conference on Disarmament, contained in document A/52/27, which notes that the Conference requested the current and incoming Presidents to conduct consultations during the inter-sessional period and make recommendations, if possible, that could help to commence early work on various agenda items. It is my sincere hope that these consultations, which will be held in Geneva in the coming months, will yield the desired results.

Another important matter that needs the urgent attention of the Conference on Disarmament in 1998 is the question of its membership. As we all are aware, a number of applications made by States for membership of this multilateral disarmament negotiating forum are still pending. Some States have been waiting to be admitted to the Conference for many years. In the circumstances, operative paragraph 4 encourages the Conference on Disarmament to continue further review of its membership.

It is the sincere hope of the sponsors that the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/52/L.20 will be adopted by consensus.

I wish next, in my capacity as the representative of Sri Lanka, to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/52/L.19, "Prevention of an arms race in outer space".

Disarmament issues relating to outer space have engaged the attention of the international community for many decades. At the height of the cold war, plans were made and steps were taken by the two super-Powers which would have eventually transformed outer space into an arena of confrontation. Given these developments, the international community became acutely aware during the 1980s of the need to take steps to prevent an arms race in outer space.

Thus in 1985 the Conference on Disarmament took a decision to establish an ad hoc committee on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Although in the early 1990s the cold war yielded to the present climate of international relations, which changed the situation significantly, leading to cooperation in outer space matters, the Ad Hoc Committee continued to function until 1994. In view of the priority given to the CTBT negotiations and other developments, the Conference on Disarmament has not been able to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee since 1995. Meanwhile, recent developments involving outer space have made it necessary for us to have a fresh look at outer space matters.

When the subject was taken up for consideration some delegations pointed out that at present there is no ongoing arms race in outer space and that the existing legal regime is sufficient to take care of any future developments. Other delegations countered this argument by pointing out that nobody can deny that such an arms race was very much in existence during the height of the cold war, and therefore measures have to be taken to prevent a recurrence of the situation. During the course of the general debate this year, many delegations referred to the need for the Conference on Disarmament to address this issue.

During the 1997 session of the Conference, delegations and groups of delegations expressed the view that the Ad Hoc Committee on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space should be re-established. One group expressed the view that the Conference could re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee and could, if necessary, revise the mandate given to the Ad Hoc Committee in CD/1125 of 14 February 1992, taking into account the recent developments in that sphere. Several delegations maintained that they had no objections in principle to the re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee in 1998, provided there is an agreement to revisit its mandate. It is against this background that the co-sponsors decided to present the draft resolution contained in A/C.1/52/L.19.

The eleventh preambular paragraph of the present text notes that during the 1997 session of the Conference on Disarmament there were no objections in principle to the re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee, subject to the re-examination of the mandate contained in document CD/1125. Operative paragraph 6 of the draft invites the Conference to re-examine the mandate with a view to updating it as appropriate, thus providing for the re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee during the 1998 session of the Conference.

In formulating the eleventh preambular paragraph and operative paragraph 6, the co-sponsors had to take into account several factors. Foremost among them was the generally held view in the Conference on Disarmament that it should re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee to commence its work in 1998. Some delegations expressed the view that the mandate could be re-examined by the Ad Hoc Committee itself. Others expressed the view that the re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee could take place

following the re-examination. Eventually the co-sponsors accepted the fact that the mandate has to be re-examined, either before or after the re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee, and as the Conference functions on the basis of consensus, no work on the issue will be possible until such time as that exercise is completed to the satisfaction of all members of the Conference.

As I said before, there is a generally shared view among the members of the Conference that the Ad Hoc Committee should be re-established. All of us share the view that the Conference should commence substantive work at the outset of its 1998 session. It is the view of the co-sponsors that the Ad Hoc Committee on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space is a mechanism the Conference could establish at the outset of its 1998 session.

On behalf of the delegations of Algeria, Bangladesh, Chile, China, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nigeria, Sudan and my own delegation I would like to request that the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/52/L.19 be adopted without a vote if possible.

Ms. Krasnohorska (Slovakia): Since this is the first time I have asked for the floor, let me briefly congratulate you, Sir, on your election to your distinguished office.

This year my country, and I personally, had the privilege of presiding for a period of nine weeks over the work of the Conference on Disarmament. I have, therefore, chosen this moment as one of the most appropriate to speak. I ask for your kind indulgence and permission to share with you, Sir, and the distinguished delegations some remarks and comments on the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

1997 has not been an easy year for the Conference on Disarmament. In 1996 the Conference achieved a very important success by finalizing the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). It was a remarkable achievement that embodied the immense will of the overwhelming majority of the international community to put an end to the history of nuclear-weapon-test explosions. At the same time the conclusion of the Treaty meant the adoption of another important step, let me say a prerequisite, for further progress on the road towards the elimination of nuclear weapons. As of now the CTBT has garnered the support of five sixths of the United Nations Member States. That speaks for itself. And let me just add that the Treaty is being scrutinized in the Slovak Parliament's committees and is expected to be ratified shortly.

1997, which came in the wake of the aforementioned great accomplishment, was to be very different. It is natural that, following the conclusion of an important period crowned by the signing of a treaty of global importance, there is a crossroads. It usually represents a major challenge. The challenge requires all the participants to analyse and assess the past and look into the future with a certain objectivity and political wisdom. Slovakia has always believed that mutual confidence, pragmatism and concentration on the issues that join us, rather than those that separate us, is the only way to proceed.

The member States of the Conference on Disarmament spent 1997 stating and restating their national priorities. Unfortunately, this approach did not lead to the opening of concrete negotiations on any substantive issue from among the broad range of arms control and disarmament problems. The main achievement of the Conference was the appointment of four special coordinators whose work laid the basis — let us hope — for a more successful year in 1998.

Next year must not be wasted. Today we have to admit that the path of restating national priorities without the necessary dose of pragmatism leads nowhere. The member States should probably establish an inventory of priorities and, if you will, secondary issues. It is understandable that the priorities of one can be of secondary importance to another. Nevertheless, for the sake of real progress, we have to be flexible and pragmatic. Slovakia believes that if no agreement is possible on the priorities, the Conference must not waste more time and should look into the secondary issues in order to identify the lowest common denominator. The Conference owes this to international public opinion and its own history.

Most important of all is to restore the shattered confidence, spirit of cooperation and needed working ambience. We all have to work together, not against each other. Only thus can we succeed.

We hold that the Conference on Disarmament, as the only global arms control and disarmament negotiating body, should tackle the most pressing issues. With concern for our national positions, Slovakia identifies its priorities in both the nuclear and conventional weapons fields. My country believes that the Conference should continue to play its incremental role in the coming years. When looking for ways to meet this task in the field of nuclear weapons,

we should start with the implementation of the principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

In Slovakia's view, the Conference should concentrate on the negotiations on the fissile material cut-off treaty as a further logical step on the path of nuclear disarmament. We believe that the Conference on Disarmament should open the cut-off treaty negotiations without further delay. In our view, the Conference should at the same time start a discussion in order to explore what further role it could play in nuclear disarmament and to identify the specific issues it could embark upon.

With regard to conventional weapons, I cannot but immediately proceed to the issue of anti-personnel landmines. Slovakia does not produce any mines and in 1994 adopted a moratorium of unlimited duration on all transfers. My country has traditionally been a co-sponsor of the United Nations resolutions calling for the total ban and the elimination of this category of weapons. It has also participated in the multilateral efforts to strengthen Protocol II to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW). Unfortunately, the strengthening process of the CCW did not meet our expectations. We have therefore, along with many other nations, become a full participant in the Ottawa process. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovakia will sign the treaty produced by the process at the upcoming ceremony in Ottawa. Nevertheless, we are of the opinion that there is still some room for the Conference on Disarmament to promote this issue, especially if we are interested in involving those nations that are not ready or able to support the Ottawa treaty, and the comprehensive ban contained in it, at this stage.

In spite of the aforesaid, I wish to reemphasize that my country believes not in rhetoric but in pragmatism. It therefore remains open and flexible, ready to consider and discuss any proposal concerning the work of the Conference on Disarmament, be it a substantive or a procedural one.

At this stage, I should probably express our appreciation for the work of and the support for the four Special Coordinators of the Conference. Their work laid valuable ground for the discussion on the issues pertaining to the Conference's work in 1998. In this context, we are ready to continue the discussion on the modernization of the agenda, the rules of procedure and the working methods of the Conference.

Taking into account operative paragraph 5 of draft resolution A/C.1/52/L.20, Slovakia hopes that the time between the 1997 and 1998 sessions of the Conference will be used by its member States to reassess their positions. We hope that the lack of flexibility that hampered the work of the Conference in 1997 will be overcome and that a spirit of cooperation will dominate our common deliberations from the very beginning of the coming session. Only thus will the Conference on Disarmament be able to preserve its place in the United Nations disarmament machinery.

Having said that, Slovakia supports the adoption by consensus of draft resolution A/C.1/52/L.20.

The Chairman: I call on the representative of Kenya to introduce draft resolutions A/C.1/52/L.25/Rev.2 and A/C.1/52/L.26.

Ms. Tolle (Kenya): I take the floor to introduce two draft resolutions on agenda items 71 (i) and 79.

On item 71 (i), I have the honour to introduce, on behalf of the Group of African States, France, the Russian Federation, Costa Rica and Monaco, draft resolution A/C.1/52/L.25/Rev.2, entitled "Prohibition of the dumping of radioactive wastes".

Generally, the draft resolution calls on all States to take measures aimed at preventing any dumping of radioactive wastes that would infringe upon the sovereignty of States. It takes note of the Bamako Convention on hazardous wastes and expresses the hope that the effective implementation of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Code of Practice on the International Transboundary Movement of Radioactive Wastes will enhance the protection of all States from the dumping of radioactive wastes on their territories. It also takes note of the commitment by the participants at the Summit on Nuclear Safety and Security, held in Moscow on 19 and 20 April 1996, to ban the dumping at sea of radioactive wastes.

The draft resolution is basically similar to the resolution adopted by the General Assembly last year. The substantive change is in operative paragraph 8, which welcomes the adoption of the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management at Vienna on 5 September

1997, as recommended by the participants at the Summit on Nuclear Safety and Security, and the signing of the Joint Convention by a number of States beginning 29 September 1997, and appeals to all States to sign and ratify the Convention, so that it may enter into force as soon as possible. This paragraph is consistent with the consensus wording of the IAEA member States' resolution GC(41)/RES 11 that was adopted at the beginning of autumn in Vienna, Austria, this year.

The resolution has, in the past, been adopted by consensus and it is the hope of the sponsors that, this year, draft resolution A/C.1/52/L.25/Rev.2 will be adopted without a vote.

I now turn to the draft resolution under agenda item 79. At its session in 1965, the General Assembly endorsed the Declaration on the Denuclearization of Africa adopted by the Assembly of the Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) at its first ordinary session held at Cairo, Egypt, in July 1964 and expressed the hope that the African States would initiate studies, as they deemed appropriate, with a view to implementing the denuclearization of Africa and take the necessary measures through the OAU to achieve this end. Consequently, the signing in Cairo of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, also known as the Pelindaba Treaty, on 11 April 1996 by 45 African States and 4 nuclear-weapon States was indeed a historic event. It is our conviction that such regional agreements serve as a useful means of reducing tension, encouraging sustainable socio-economic development, promoting confidence and enhancing regional stability aid security.

On behalf of the Group of African States, I therefore have the honour of introducing the draft resolution in document A/C.1/52/L.26, entitled "African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty".

The preambular part of the draft resolution recalls the successful conclusion of the signing ceremony of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty in April 1996 and the Cairo Declaration adopted on that occasion. It notes the statement made by the President of the Security Council on behalf of the members of the Council on 12 April 1996, which is contained in document S/PRST/1996/17 and which states that the signature of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty constituted an important contribution by the African countries to the maintenance of international peace and security.

The resolution calls upon the African countries that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Treaty as soon as possible and expresses appreciation to the nuclear-weapon States that have signed the Protocols that concern them, and calls upon those which have not yet ratified the Protocols concerning them to do so as soon as possible. In this respect, the draft resolution appreciates the steps taken by France, which has signed and ratified Protocols I, II and III. It calls upon the States with *de jure* and de facto treaties with the region that have not yet done so to take all necessary measures to ensure speedy ratification of the Treaty. Furthermore, it calls upon African States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) that have not yet concluded safeguard agreements with the IAEA pursuant to the NPT to do so, thereby satisfying the requirements of article 9 (b) and annex II to the Pelindaba Treaty when it enters into force. It also expresses gratitude to the Secretaries-General of the United Nations and of the Organization of African Unity, as well as to the IAEA, for the diligence with which they have rendered effective assistance to the signatories to the Treaty.

As can be seen, the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/52/L.26 is based on last year's resolution, with a few amendments to both the preambular and the operative paragraphs taking into account progress that has taken place since last year. In the past, the resolutions on this subject have been adopted by consensus. It is therefore the hope of the sponsors that this year the draft resolution will once again be adopted without a vote.

Since I have the floor, I would like to make some remarks on behalf of my delegation on draft resolution A/52/C.1/L.1, introduced by the delegation of Canada. It is common knowledge that the African continent is the most heavily mined region in the world. Landmines, those inhumane weapons, have destructive and destabilizing effects long after the end of a conflict. They cause untold havoc, maiming and killing innocent civilians, mainly women and children, and rendering whole agricultural areas physically uninhabitable and economically unproductive. It is in this context, therefore, that my delegation fully associates itself with the Ottawa process.

Mr. Goosen (South Africa): The South African delegation associates itself fully with the statement just made by the delegation of Kenya on behalf of the group of African States, and we wish to express our very strong support for draft resolution A/C.1/52/L.26 on the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty. My delegation believes that this draft resolution on the African Nuclear-Weapon-

Free Zone Treaty — the Treaty of Pelindaba — reflects the shared ideal of all countries to see the African continent free from nuclear weapons, and that it represents an achievement of which we can all rightly be proud.

Following the signature in Cairo of the Pelindaba Treaty by the South African Foreign Minister, I wish to announce that the South African parliamentary portfolio committees on foreign affairs and on defence considered the Treaty at a joint session and recommended its approval by both chambers of Parliament. This afternoon, in Cape Town, the Pelindaba Treaty was considered by the National Assembly and was unanimously approved. The Treaty will be considered by the National Council of Provinces, the second chamber of Parliament, during the course of next week. It is expected that the second chamber will also approve the Treaty. By that process the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty will be ratified by the South African Parliament, making South Africa the third country to ratify the Treaty since it was opened for signature. We are pleased that two other signatories have already ratified the Treaty, and we wish to encourage all African States to do so expeditiously. We are equally pleased that all the nuclear-weapon States have signed the relevant Protocols to the Treaty, and wish to give special recognition to France, which has already ratified the Protocols which apply to it.

It is our conviction that the Treaty of Pelindaba will serve to strengthen the international non-proliferation regime and encourage the establishment of additional nuclear-weapon-free zones in other parts of the world. In this regard, South Africa fully supports initiatives to create nuclear-weapon-free zones in the world, which we consider to be a clear demonstration of the continued commitment of non-nuclear-weapon States to the goal of ridding the world of nuclear weapons. The Pelindaba Treaty is another milestone along this road, as is the conclusion of the Treaty of Bangkok, the Treaty of Rarotonga and the Treaty of Tlatelolco, as well as the initiative to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia and the continued efforts to promote the southern hemisphere as a zone free from nuclear weapons.

The Chairman: I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan to introduce draft resolutions A/52/C.1/L.38 and A/52/C.1/L.39.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): I should like to introduce, on behalf of the delegation of Bangladesh and of my own delegation, the draft resolution in document A/C.1/52/L.38 on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia. The General Assembly first endorsed the creation of such a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia in resolution 3265 B (XXIX) of 9 December 1974. This endorsement has been reaffirmed by the General Assembly at successive sessions by ever increasing numbers of votes each year for the past 22 years.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones was considered by the 1978 first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. It was endorsed by the special session as an important process which would strengthen the international community's efforts to promote nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. Nuclear-weapon-free zones have been established in several regions of the world where the States concerned recognized the importance of these measures in their endeavours to promote regional and international peace and security. The Treaty of Tlatelolco, the Treaty of Pelindaba, the Treaty of Rarotonga and the Bangkok Treaty testify to the validity and success of regional measures to promote non-proliferation and security. These important agreements have led to the serious consideration of making the entire southern hemisphere a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

Pakistan's proposal for establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia predates several of these successful initiatives. It is motivated by the desire to preclude the possibility of a nuclear arms race, whose spectre was brought to South Asia by the 1974 Pokaran nuclear explosion. We believe that, despite the passage of several years and the development of nuclear capabilities in South Asia, the proposal remains valid today. It continues to manifest our commitment to seek practical modalities and agreements to promote the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in the region of South Asia. It is part of our endeavour to promote a comprehensive approach to resolving problems in our region, including the resolution of disputes and promoting security by addressing conventional and nuclear issues.

Pakistan remains hopeful that with the necessary cooperation and dialogue, a suitable and effective regime can be established in South Asia to prevent the proliferation of nuclear arms. This would be in keeping with unilateral declarations made at the highest levels by the leaders of South Asia, pledging themselves not to acquire, develop or manufacture nuclear weapons.

The draft resolution in document A/C.1/52/L.38 reaffirms the international community's firm support for the objective of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia. This objective constitutes an urgent priority in view of the danger of nuclear escalation and aggravation of tensions in

the region. It is the sincere hope of the sponsors that the draft resolution in document A/C.1/52/L.38 will be adopted once again with the widest possible majority by this Committee and the General Assembly.

I now have the honour to introduce the draft resolution entitled "Regional disarmament", contained in document A/C.1/52/L.39, on behalf of the following sponsors: Albania, Armenia, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Egypt, Ghana, Indonesia, Liberia, Mali, Nepal, New Zealand, the Niger, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine and Zimbabwe.

The draft resolution reflects the strong international support for the regional approach to confidence-building, non-proliferation and disarmament. Such measures, at the regional and subregional levels, are essential complements to the global efforts to promote disarmament and international security. In the post-cold-war era, the imperative need for such measures, especially in regions of tension, is self-evident, since major threats to peace and security have proliferated in recent years through regional disputes and tensions.

These conflicts often lead to the excessive acquisition and accumulation of armaments, raising the chances of escalation in the scale of violence and suffering in conflicts. The asymmetries in defence capabilities at the regional level create the danger of aggression and the use of force. This could, in turn, lead to the search for non-conventional means of self-defence and deterrence.

The international community now has fully accepted the concept that arms control and disarmament measures at the global level must be complemented by measures at the regional level. It is essential that the specific measures adopted to address regional security should be tailored to address the particular dynamics of specific regions. Both global and regional disarmament must therefore be pursued simultaneously, since both are essential to create the conditions for general and complete disarmament.

The draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/52/L.39 affirms these propositions regarding the importance of regional disarmament. It takes into account most of the guidelines for regional disarmament adopted by the Disarmament Commission in 1993. It also underlines that regional disarmament measures, by enhancing the security of regional States, will contribute to international peace and security by reducing the risk of regional conflicts.

The draft resolution also calls on States to conclude agreements, wherever possible, for nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament and confidence-building measures at the regional and subregional levels. The progress made towards nuclear-weapon-free zones and zones of peace in several parts of the world is a most encouraging sign of the potential of the regional approach to disarmament. Therefore, the draft resolution welcomes the initiatives that have been taken by some States for disarmament, non-proliferation and security at the regional and subregional levels and also supports the efforts for confidence-building measures also.

The sponsors are confident that the draft resolution will be adopted, once again, by an overwhelming majority.

The Chairman: I call on the representative of the United States to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/52/L.33/Rev.1.

Mr. Grey (United States of America): I am pleased to introduce the draft resolution entitled "Compliance with arms limitation and disarmament and non-proliferation agreements" contained in document A/C.1/52/L.33/Rev.1. We have sponsored this draft resolution since 1985 and have presented it on a biennial basis since 1989. During this period, the draft resolution has always been adopted without a vote.

The draft resolution now includes references to non-proliferation as well as to disarmament and arms control agreements. This is intended to recognize the vital role that non-proliferation plays in contributing to international peace and security. New language has also been included to reinforce two points: first, that effective compliance measures make an important contribution to international peace and security; and, secondly, that full compliance with and participation in such verification and compliance regimes is essential to their success. This addition is necessary at this juncture in the light of recent efforts to enhance arms control verification and compliance regimes. For example, the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) has brought the treaty's implementation provisions into play. Negotiations in the Ad Hoc Group of Government Experts on a verification protocol for the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC) are well under way, and the International Atomic Energy

Agency (IAEA) has adopted measures to strengthen safeguards.

The revised draft resolution before us reflects the results of consultations with several delegations. We are grateful for the cooperation of all involved, which led to what we believe to be a consensus text that reflects the concerns of all parties.

We believe that the issue of compliance is of fundamental importance to international security, and that the importance of universal adherence to arms control obligations cannot be over-emphasized. Such compliance contributes directly to world order. We hope that the draft resolution will serve to reaffirm the importance of compliance with existing treaties and agreements, as well as highlight the critical areas of monitoring and compliance when negotiating new agreements.

The United States is grateful to the approximately 60 other sponsors of the draft resolution, and we request that it be adopted without a vote.

The Chairman: I now call on the representative of the Netherlands to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/52/L.43.

Mr. Majoor (Netherlands): During the thematic debate last week, my delegation intervened on the issue of confidence- building measures, including transparency in armaments. We stressed the importance of increasing confidence among States for the promotion of stability and international peace and security.

The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is a practical confidence-building measure which precisely aims at enhancing peace and security worldwide and regionally. Today I introduce draft resolution A/C.1/52/L.43, on transparency in armaments and the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, on behalf of 93 sponsors.

Draft resolution A/C.1/52/L.43 seeks to confirm the basic principle that greater transparency and confidence-building in general contributes to security among States. It reiterates the view that the Register is an important step forward in the promotion of transparency in military matters. As usual, it welcomes the yearly report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/52/312, which includes the returns of Member States to the Register. These returns now total 90, covering the bulk of the arms transfers in the world in the seven categories of the Register.

The main focus of this year's draft resolution is the report on the continuing operation of the Register and its further development prepared this year by the Secretary-General with the assistance of the Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. We are very satisfied that the work of the Group concluded with a consensus report, contained in document A/52/316. The Group undertook a serious review of the operation of the Register so far and concluded that the trend in participation is positive. Furthermore, the Group reached consensus on a number of recommendations aimed at improving the quantity and quality of reporting to the Register. As far as the further development of the Register is concerned, many proposals were considered but no agreement could be reached on any one of them this year. The draft resolution closely follows the consensus in the 1997 Group and does not attempt to highlight specific aspirations of specific States or groups of States.

In order to make the Group of Experts' recommendations operational, paragraph 3 of the draft calls upon Member States to report to the Register in future not only on the basis of resolutions 46/36 L and 47/52 L, but also on the basis of those recommendations. From now on, returns to the Register are to be provided to the Secretary-General by 31 May annually, instead of 30 April as formerly. This will give States more time to prepare their returns and could contribute to more precise reporting.

Because a number of the Group's recommendations are directed to the United Nations Secretariat, paragraph 6 requests the Secretary-General himself to implement the recommendations that fall within his competence. The fact that the Centre for Disarmament Affairs can now assist Member States even more in filing their returns is also expected to contribute to more and better reports.

Finally, the 1997 Group concluded that a further comprehensive review of the operation of the Register was needed at an appropriate time. A period of three years between reviews seems an appropriate amount of time to acquire a proper perspective of the functioning and development of the Register, and draft resolution A/C.1/52/L.43 therefore proposes that the next review by a group of governmental experts take place in the year 2000.

I would like to say a few words on transparency related to weapons of mass destruction, which I know is of some concern to some States. At the inception of the Register, it was agreed to limit it strictly to conventional weapons. At the same time, in order to be able to address

concerns related to weapons of mass destruction, the Conference on Disarmament was mandated to discuss that issue, and also to elaborate practical means to increase transparency and openness related to the transfer of high technology with military applications. In 1994 a paragraph was added to the annual draft resolution requesting Member States to give their views on transparency related to weapons of mass destruction. That paragraph has been constantly maintained, and is included in the present draft as operative paragraph 5 (a).

The Group discussed the issue of weapons of mass destruction at great length, which is reflected in paragraphs 8 and 38 of the report. By endorsing the Group's report, draft resolution A/C.1/52/L.43 also endorses the consensus in the Group on this issue. It would not have been correct to reflect this explicitly in the present draft, which seeks to strengthen the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms — I emphasize "conventional". At present, the Netherlands draft faithfully reflects, explicitly and implicitly, the general agreement on this contentious issue.

Concerns were also raised on whether States could explain their concerns related to non-participation in the Register. My delegation is prepared to propose to the co-sponsors of A/C.1/52/L.43 that we include language explicitly enabling States to give such views, if that could help retain only one draft resolution on transparency in armaments.

Let me reiterate, once more, that the support for the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is solid. That solid support was again confirmed by the preparedness of so many delegations to sponsor the draft contained in A/C.1/52/L.43. I would like to thank all our 93 co-sponsors for choosing this way to express their support for the important confidence-building measure the Register is. It shows that the idea of transparency in armaments remains firmly rooted in all regions of the world where nations are convinced of the contribution it can give to peace and stability.

Mr. Díaz-Pereira (Paraguay) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The delegation of Paraguay, as coordinator of the Rio Group this year, has the honour to make the following statement on behalf of the States members of the Group, in respect of draft resolution A/C.1/52/L.2 on transparency in armaments.

First, we should highlight the importance of establishing durable peace in regions and subregions through confidence-building measures. Such measures enable peoples to ease tensions and promote disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful settlement of disputes and make it possible to focus efforts to realize their desires and aspirations for social and economic development.

In the framework of the Organization of American States, we have been broadening the concept of confidence-building measures, which foster closer relations among States and reduce tensions due to mistaken perceptions.

In this context, a meeting of experts was held in Buenos Aires in 1994, and the first Regional Conference on Confidence-and Security-Building Measures was held in Santiago, Chile, in 1995. In keeping with the major principles relating to this issue, adopted at the regional level in various resolutions and in various forums of the Organization of American States, the Heads of State and Government of the Rio Group, at their latest summit, held in Asunción last August, stated their opinion on this issue, as we mentioned in our statement during the general debate in this Committee.

We would also like once again to express the firm conviction of the States members of the Rio Group regarding the importance they attach to transparency in armaments, which we see as an expression of confidence-building measures and a mechanism for avoiding imbalances that give rise to arms races, with all their negative repercussions for countries' economies. In that connection, members of the Rio Group have taken note of the report on the operation of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

In this regard, on behalf of the Rio Group, we would like to express our support for the work done by the expert of the Republic of Argentina as Chairman of the Group of Governmental Experts which is responsible for discussing issues relating to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and its further development.

In conclusion, we would like to state that the countries that are members of the Rio Group are determined to continue to work to establish and improve mutual confidence-building machinery in order to foster transparency and communications through increasing exchanges that strengthen cooperation.

Ms. Ramírez (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Without prejudice to the statement that has just been made by the delegation of Paraguay on behalf of the Rio Group, the delegation of Argentina wishes to highlight a few points relating to draft resolution A/C.1/52/L.43 on

transparency in armaments, introduced by the Netherlands and co-sponsored by Argentina.

The Argentine Republic supports measures to enhance regional and international peace and security, particularly those that increase conflict-prevention mechanisms, promote the non-proliferation of weapons and ensure the implementation of the Charter of the United Nations.

The proliferation of regional conflicts and increased instability, together with an excessive stockpiling of weapons in various parts of the world, mean that we must ensure the effective control of international arms transfers. Measures to promote confidence and security, and, in particular, transparency in armaments, are of special importance in ensuring preventive diplomacy.

The establishment of a universal and non-discriminatory register under the auspices of the United Nations, such as the Register of Conventional Arms, is undoubtedly one of the main achievements of multilateral disarmament in recent years and contributes to the promotion of transparency in military matters. Sending information to the Register concerning international arms transfers, *matériel*, the acquisition of equipment to produce weapons nationally and the relevant policies helps build confidence. Furthermore, this is a concrete, effective security mechanism that is relatively easy to implement and helps avoid misunderstandings and errors while fostering in-depth, constructive dialogue that enhances mutual understanding and alerts the international community to the excessive stockpiling of weapons.

In this connection, Argentina regards the outcome of the review of the operation of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms carried out this year by the Group of Governmental Experts as satisfactory, in that it reaffirmed the importance of this instrument, recommended extending its scope and defined certain practical features. At the same time, we must acknowledge that the Group could have made even more progress regarding agreed parameters for the seven categories of the Register, as well as its extension.

While the level of participation of States in the Register is encouraging, it remains far from universal. The participation of all must be ensured if the Register is to be consolidated over time so as to become an effective instrument of preventive diplomacy.

Argentina would like to make a friendly appeal to all Member States of the Organization to submit regular reports to the Register, including those described to as "nil" reports, along with as much additional information as possible on procurement from national production and military holdings. Such an effort makes a substantial contribution to enhancing transparency and confidence-building in the field of conventional weapons, while contributing to efforts by the United Nations to reduce tension, resolve regional conflicts, prevent the arms race and achieve disarmament.

Mr. Seibert (Germany): I have the honour to introduce, on behalf of the sponsors, the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/52/L.18, "Consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures". The draft resolution is sponsored by the Member States mentioned in the document. In addition, Bulgaria, Turkey and Panama have joined their ranks. As in the previous year, we attach particular importance to the fact that the sponsorship bridges the usual regional group lines and involves Member States from virtually all regions of the globe. I should like to express special thanks to all of them.

The draft resolution entitled "Consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures" was first introduced in last year's General Assembly, where it was adopted by consensus as resolution 51/45 N.

As reiterated in the second preambular paragraph, its basic idea was to focus the First Committee's attention in a more integrated manner on the relevance of certain practical disarmament measures for the consolidation of peace in post-conflict environments. As experience has shown, such measures as, for example, arms control, particularly with regard to small arms and light weapons, confidence-building, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants, and demining and conversion are often a prerequisite to maintaining and consolidating peace and security and thus to providing a basis for effective rehabilitation and socio-economic development in areas that have suffered from conflict.

This aspect of resolution 51/45 N remains unchanged in the new draft. In the meantime, however, some important new developments have taken place, which deserve to be duly reflected in the text.

Since the adoption of resolution 51/45 N, the importance of practical disarmament measures has received growing attention from the international community in many respects. We note this with satisfaction in the third preambular paragraph. But, first and foremost, this is reflected in the fact that, for its 1997 session, the United

Nations Disarmament Commission agreed on a conventional item that explicitly referred to resolution 51/45 N, thus including it directly in its deliberations on future guidelines on this item. These deliberations, according to the usual practice, will continue for two additional sessions of the Disarmament Commission.

As a consequence, reference to the Commission proceedings has been given the most prominent place in the draft resolution; it is to be found in operative paragraph 1.

Those who participated in the Commission's discussions on this item in April will agree that we had a lively and fruitful exchange of views. We, like many others, regard the Chairman's paper as well as other views expressed, including the different working papers submitted during the session, as a useful basis for further deliberations.

The second major component of this year's draft stems from the report of the Secretary-General on the consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures [A/52/289], submitted pursuant to resolution 51/45 N.

In paragraph 12 of his report the Secretary-General expressed his view that the readiness of the international community to assist affected States in their efforts to consolidate peace would greatly benefit the effective implementation of practical disarmament measures, and added that he would wish to see the establishment of a group of interested States in order to facilitate this process and build upon the momentum generated.

We have taken up this proposal in operative paragraphs 3 and 4, and the General Assembly would request the Secretary-General to lend his support to its implementation. However, the text makes it clear that the initiative remains with Member States. Let me stress that many of the sponsors of this draft, countries in need of assistance as well as those willing to assist, attach particular importance to such a tangible follow-up to the resolution.

With these basic explanatory remarks, I put this draft resolution before the Committee. Extensive consultations with co-sponsors, but also with other delegations, have been conducted prior to the tabling of the draft in an effort to again secure consensus on this draft resolution. From the reactions received so far, we are confident that the draft will again be adopted without a vote, and we hope to be able to count on the support of all members.

Mr. Alloway (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom delegation warmly welcomes the resolution on transparency in armaments in document A/C.1/52/L.43, which has just been introduced by the representative of the Netherlands, and which we are pleased to sponsor. We wish to express our gratitude to our Dutch colleagues for the hard work that has gone into the draft, and for their efforts to find broadly acceptable language.

As you know, Mr. Chairman, the United Kingdom has been a strong supporter of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms since its inception, and we take particular interest in its development. We regard it as a unique instrument of global transparency in conventional arms exports. The United Kingdom is committed to strengthening the Register wherever possible, and to encouraging greater disclosure of information on arms exports and arms transfers by all countries.

As many representatives will know, we were very disappointed that the Group of Experts was unable to agree to any expansion, particularly in reporting procurement from national production. For that reason, while fully supporting the Dutch draft, the United Kingdom would have preferred an even stronger draft resolution; specifically, we would have preferred operative paragraph 4 to read

> "*Requests* Member States in a position to do so, pending further development of the Register, to provide information on procurement from national production and military holdings and to make use of the 'Remarks' column in the standardized reporting form to provide additional information such as types and models."

The United Kingdom would like to take the opportunity of the tabling of this draft resolution to urge other States to provide timely returns, including background information on procurement from national production and military holdings, on the same basis as imports and exports.

Mr. Campbell (Australia): I welcome the opportunity to introduce draft decision A/C.1/52/L.7 under agenda item 64 on inclusion of the item entitled "Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty".

The draft decision is a procedural one designed to include an item on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in the provisional agenda of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly.

The most recent resolution on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty did not include the necessary forward-looking element which would have allowed for its automatic inclusion in our agenda. The resolution adopted towards the end of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly placed the item in the agenda of the fifty-first session, but last year's session of the Assembly took no action on the subject. Hence, Australia's action in putting forward the draft decision in document A/C.1/52/L.7.

Australia sincerely hopes that the draft decision will be adopted by consensus.

Programme of work

The Chairman: In accordance with the adopted programme of work, the First Committee will begin the last stage of its work, namely, action on all draft resolutions submitted under all agenda items, on Monday, 10 November.

In this connection, I have, with the assistance of the Secretariat, prepared an informal paper on the suggested programme of work for the clustering of draft resolutions for this stage of the Committee's work. That informal paper was the result of consultations among regional groups and was distributed to delegations this afternoon.

As in previous years, the First Committee will begin its voting on cluster 1, "Nuclear weapons", and once actions on that cluster have been concluded, we will proceed with the other clusters sequentially.

If there are no comments on the clustering, I shall take it that the Committee agrees to proceed accordingly.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.